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The University of Dayton

News Release

July 9, 1993

Contact: Pam Huber

UD-DAYTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCIENCE PROJECT WINS EXTENSION FROM DAYTON SCHOOL BOARD

DAYTON, Ohio — The new life-science units in Dayton public schools this fall will bring life into the classroom — in more ways than one. Snakes, toads, frogs, fish and other animals will be guests in Dayton classrooms, and their presence is designed to bring science to life for students.

The University of Dayton and Dayton Public Schools teamed up in 1990 to revamp the district's entire science curriculum, and the first new units will be used throughout the district in September. On July 8, Dayton's school board approved a one-year extension of the project that will provide \$65,000 for administrative and support services.

The new life-science units for elementary and middle grades, developed by teachers and pilot tested last year in three Dayton schools, stress activity and hands-on contact with the concepts of science. Third graders will make child-sized nests when they study "Scales and Feathers," a unit on reptiles and birds. Fifth graders will dangle dead crickets in front of live toads to watch the toad eat and learn more about "Amphibians and Fins" in a unit on fish and amphibians like frogs, toads and salamanders.

The activity-based science classes capitalize on children's natural curiosity about the world, says Thomas Matczynski, professor of education at UD and co-director of the UD-DPS science project. "What we're doing is building a foundation, focusing on scientific concepts, scientific process skills and critical thinking," he says. "When students get to high school, they're ready and eager for higher-level science and problem-solving."

As part of the project, high-school science courses in the Dayton system are being restructured to include greater integration of science concepts.

Students in high-school and middle-school science classes will be working in improved laboratories this fall. A team of science professors and professional scientists from

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local industries evaluated every lab in the school district and made recommendations to upgrade the facilities. Work at most of the high schools has been completed, and renovations to the middle-school labs are planned for this summer.

In addition to the new units and improved lab conditions, the science project encompasses a computer network that allows teachers and students in the public schools to pose their questions straight to experts at UD and 30 partners in industry and government. Through the system, Dayton students and teachers are linked to experts in 33 states through computer networks operated by state education departments.

In the next phase of the science project, slated to begin this fall, selected Dayton teachers will pilot test new physical-science units, such as "Light and Sound," "Water and its Properties" and "Motion." Additional teachers will learn to teach the classroom-tested units in workshops next summer, and the new units will be used district-wide beginning with the 1994-95 school year. New units in earth science, now being developed, will be pilot tested in 1994-95 and implemented the following year.

Project organizers expect to gauge the effectiveness of the new curriculum by monitoring scores for ninth-grade science proficiency. The state tests are planned to begin in 1995. "Until then, just seeing the renewed commitment from teachers and the excitement in the kids tells us we're succeeding," Matczynski says.

Funding and equipment in excess of \$1 million for the UD-DPS science project have come from the National Science Foundation and corporate and industry partners as well as the Dayton Public Schools and the University of Dayton.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For more information on the project, call co-directors **Thomas Matczynski** at (513) 229-3734 and **Thomas Lasley** at (513) 229-3327.